

John Fawcett: "Love to Jesus is maintained and continued in its warmth and fervor--by frequent meditation on His adorable person, His dying love, and His infinite excellence and preciousness. If we lose sight of Him as the spring of all our happiness, and of His ineffable glories--the fervency of our love for Him will be abated."

The Baptist Catechism

AS PRINTED BY THE CHARLESTON ASSOCIATION IN 1813 *(Presented here as originally published – this does not constitute a full endorsement of the Riverside Baptist Church)*

108. Q. What do we pray for in the first petition?

A. In the first petition, which is, Hallowed be thy name (Mt. 6:9), we pray that God would enable us and others to glorify him in all that whereby he maketh himself known (Ps. 67:2, 3), and that he would dispose all things to his own glory (Ps. 83 throughout; Rom. 11:36).

109. Q. What do we pray for in the second petition?

A. In the second petition, which is, Thy kingdom come (Mt. 6:10), we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed (Ps. 68:1, 18), and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced (Rev. 12:10, 11), ourselves and others brought into it and kept in it (2 Thes. 3: 1; Rom. 10: 1; Jn. 17:19, 20), and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened (Rev. 22:10).

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Sunday Morning Bible Study -- 10:00 AM

Sunday Morning Worship -- 11:00 AM

Prayer and Bible Study Wednesday Evening 6:30 PM

WCWV 92.9 FM – 8:00 AM Sunday Morning

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST REPORT

THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Pillar and ground of the Truth” -- 1 Timothy 3:15

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LEARNING TO BE CONTENT

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. (Philippians 4:11-13)

In 1648 the Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs wrote of this passage: “This text contains a very timely cordial to revive the drooping spirits of the saints in these sad and sinking times. For the ‘hour of temptation’ has already come upon the world to try the inhabitants of the earth.” I can only wonder at what the thoughts of Mr. Burroughs would be if he were alive today. Never in my lifetime have I seen such unrest and unease as I witness today. There is a danger of true believers being affected by the pressures of the age. The example of the Apostle here is valuable as we would seek a scriptural basis for a sense of sufficiency in contending with whatever comes our way.

The Philippian epistle has been characterized as a “missionary thank you letter.” Even here these statements are in the context of Paul thanking them for past considerations and provision. They had maintained contact with him and his work in the service of our Lord. He carefully acknowledged that their gifts to him had been in the interest of the Gospel, have been acts of love, and had been carried out sacrificially. Here it seems that they had lamented the hindrances that prevented them from acting fully on their intentions. Paul would assure them of his understanding and then reassure them of things he had learned that were even then bearing fruit. They had lacked

opportunity (v. 10), but he was equipped to deal with all forms of present circumstance. So, while he acknowledged their benevolence, he assured them that he had no need.

It might seem that Paul was a bit smug at this point in that we all have proudly asserted that we have no need of help when in fact we are fully dependent on the grace of our God. Paul’s assertion here was based on lessons learned. In saying “I have learned,” Paul dismisses any thought of contentment or sufficiency coming as a result of anything in him. He was not ever to be the “victim of circumstance.” How often have we either heard or said, “I would do thus and so, but I am hindered, or I can’t afford it.” Paul carefully sought the will of the Lord and looked to nothing else. This was not about being happy or wrapped in comfort. It was rather to be assured that the grace of God would prevail to him and through him. It was a sufficiency for the work before him and he had experienced success in all forms of spiritual endeavor. He was not daunted by external circumstances; his “help cometh from the Lord which made Heaven and earth.”

As a result of being stoned and left for dead and raising up to continue preaching he learned how to be abased. It is not merely that he was abased. It was that he had learned of the

sufficiency of the grace of God through overcoming impossible physical abuse – a near death experience. It was in a Philippian jail that despite a terrible beating and imprisonment that joy would instruct his heart in the praise of our Lord and so erupt with singing. How easy it would have been for Paul to have become embittered at his circumstance and even to question the wisdom of God. Here he puts it in perspective for us all. He had learned to put no confidence in the flesh, his or that of others. He was rather directed to greater faith in the Lord. Furthermore, he was given to an even greater confidence in the will and purpose of God and an even greater assurance that outward conditions could not hinder the divine purpose in its execution.

He also knew how to abound. There is no doubt that there were times when things went well for Paul personally and ministerially. Both at Corinth and Ephesus he seems to have had lengthy periods of teaching without violent opposition. Many have commented that it is easier and safer to suffer hardship than it is to enjoy prosperity. In times of prosperity, we must be wary of presumption on the grace of God.

Paul adds to the thought of “I have learned” by declaring that he is “instructed.” He is the student being taught. Thayer asserts here that Paul is saying that “I am initiated into all the mysteries of poverty and want.” He had learned the secret of dealing with being full and suffering hunger, of abounding and suffering need. Our tendency here is to react in a natural way in being sad at the difficult situation of hunger and then rejoicing when all is well. Like

many other aspects of the Gospel mystery this remains a secret to many. It is not something learned from a self-help book or as a method to be put into practice. It is rather that which is contained in Paul’s declaration of ability.

I have both said and heard others also claim that “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” It is easy to say but not so easy to embrace fully as did Paul. Verse 13 should never be separated from what is stated before as to what Paul had learned and in which he was instructed. Of course, the “all things” is that to which we are called and enjoined in suffering for Christ’s sake. Hendriksen translates this as “I can do all things in Him who infuses strength into me.” Hendriksen adds, “Surely a wonderful testimony! Whatever needs to be done Paul can do, for he is in Christ (Php. 3:9), being by the indwelling presence of Christ’s Spirit and by Spirit-wrought faith in vital union with his Lord and Savior.”

The lessons Paul learned and testified of are of the utmost importance to all believers. Perhaps we have failed to learn how to prosper. To do so finds one ill-prepared to learn how to suffer want. Do we know the Lord in such vital union and communion that He is our all-consuming thought? How will we do in the “swelling of Jordan?” Galatians 2:20 declares that we are in Christ and that alone is enough for us to know contentment in the sense of peace as well as sufficiency to deal with all that is before us. Paul’s declaration to Timothy was “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” This is far more than merely being happy with ourselves; it is the state of sensing the presence of Christ and the sufficiency given us in Him. *bhs*

"God has set that grim porter Death at His gate; to see that, as we brought nothing into the world, so we carry nothing out of it. Certainly, dying must needs be a terrible thing to those who have gotten nothing but what they can no longer keep, when their souls must be set on shore in a vast and dark eternity, all naked and destitute, having nothing to relieve or support them." Ezekiel Hopkins, 1663

Some things to meditate on daily:

1. The greatness and goodness of Almighty God and His love to us in Christ.
2. The uncertainty of our lives, and the certainty of death.
3. The last and strict day of account.
4. The joys of Heaven and the torments of Hell.
5. The vanity of all earthly things.
6. That sin is not so sweet in the committing of it, as it is bitter in the reckoning of it.
7. That there is more mercy in Christ, than sin in us.
8. That poverty and affliction take away the fuel that feeds pride.
9. That it is better to go afflicted to Heaven, than merry to Hell.
10. That those who desire to be happy in Heaven, must first be holy on earth!

(Richard Sibbes)

And so we're told, "Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us" (62:8). Such encouragement is needed because so often our faith falters in various situations while we await the outcome. And frequently our situations don't really have a happy ending. Is God sovereign then also? This is the crucial question. It's difficult to believe that God is in control when we're in the midst of heartache or grief. I've struggled with this many times myself. So often I've had to decide whether I would trust Him when my heart ached. I continually realize anew that we must learn to trust God one circumstance at a time. It's not a matter of my feelings but of my will. I never feel like trusting God when adversity strikes, but I can choose to do so anyway. That act of the will must be based on belief, and belief must be based on the truth that God is sovereign. He carries out His own good purposes without ever being thwarted, and nothing is outside His sovereign will. We must cling to this in the face of adversity and tragedy if we're to glorify God by trusting Him. I'll say this as gently and compassionately as I know how: Our first priority in adversity is to honor and glorify God by trusting Him. Gaining relief from our feelings of heartache or disappointment or frustration is a natural desire (see 2 Corinthians 12:9), and God has promised to give us grace sufficient for our trials and peace for our anxieties (see Philippians 4:6-7). But just as God's will is to take precedence over our will ("Not as I will, but as you will" [Matthew 26:39]), so God's honor is to take precedence over our feelings. We honor God by choosing to trust Him when we don't understand what He is doing or why He has allowed some adverse circumstance to occur. As we seek God's glory, we may be sure He has purposed our good and won't be frustrated in fulfilling that purpose.

--Jerry Bridges

EVERY BELIEVER IN THE CROSS MUST BEAR THE CROSS. – SPURGEON